

AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES
July 8, 2010
Bangs Community Center Large Activity Room

Members Present: Daniel Clapp, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Doris Holden, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow, Mary Jane Laus, Barbara Sutherland, Juana Trujillo

Select Board Liaison: absent

Staff Present: Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Evelyn Ross (HVES Lunch Site Director)

Guests: Larry Shaffer (Town Manager), Barbara Slovin (President of the Friends of the Amherst SC) Joan Logan, Lillian Scott, Richard Kofler, Alan Root, Martha Reuben, Elizabeth Kelly, Jack Wollensak, Irene Barrelet, Bea Dragon, Margarita Zamora, Joan Swift, Sue Dierks, Renee La Rue and Bill Shontz.

Welcome: Dan Clapp, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:09 AM.

Minutes of Previous Meeting: The minutes of the June 3, 2010 meeting were approved and accepted.

Friends' Treasurer Report:

Doris reported little change since our last meeting. There is \$13,946.79 in the checking account and \$70,569.18 in the investment account, plus a \$5000 seven-month CD.

Conversation with Larry Shaffer:

Larry said that things are on track to implement the changes that Nancy, Julie Federman, Linda Chalfant and Kay Zlogar recommended. He appreciates all their hard work as they put together the clerical suite. He will support the effort as much as necessary. Larry's vision for collaboration was more aggressive but it is more important that he provide inspiration to the department heads and opportunities for them to figure out where opportunities exist. He has allowed that to happen and will now step back. Larry will ask the department heads to report back after six months to find out what has been learned, what worked, what didn't work and what the next step might be. Larry expressed appreciation for the input he received from the COA and the interested citizens and for everyone's patience with him.

Dan asked if Larry's statement during our last meeting "this is a great first step" meant he had any ideas about "the next step" or if it is just a matter of waiting to see how things go.

Larry: "I've got lots of ideas but that's not the important thing. What's really important are our departments working together trying to figure out where the opportunities might exist internally." I think once you put competent people together where they can learn about themselves and their own operations there will be many things they will come up with.

Larry said that one of the things he is committed to is bringing additional resources to the Bangs to make the delivery of services more efficient and effective. One example is the new widescreen TV in the Senior Center lounge. Another is the electronic billboard which is designed to provide a host of information to the users of Bangs, such as locations of and directions to activities, agendas, music, split screens to allow for videos of other events. There is an electronic board at each entrance to Bangs. The technology is less expensive than having people doing the same thing.

Joel referred to previous discussions about upgrading some of the facilities at the Senior Center to make it more comfortable. He asked if there was funding available.

Larry would be glad to look at a list of such projects. If the dollar amounts are reasonable, he will move resources to provide for such improvements.

Dan expressed gratitude to Larry for his willingness to listen and accommodate plans based on the interests of our seniors.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

Office Arrangements:

Nancy explained the changes in offices. Pam, the administrative assistant for the Health Department, now occupies the office next to Nancy. This will enable her to network and cross train with Karen, the SC administrative assistant.

Ren, the Cambodian Outreach worker, and Evelyn Ross, the lunch site Director, have moved into Maura's office and will share a desk. Ren works part time in the AM and Evie works part time in the PM. The volunteer receptionists will be trained as receptionists for all departments and offices in Bangs.

Bubble Room and New Vehicle Update:

Nancy followed up on Stephanie's suggestion at the last COA meeting and reported that the money to replace the floor in the Bubble Room to a more cleanable flooring may not need to be paid for by the Friends. The Finance Director said that the maintenance budget for Bangs might have money available for replacing the floor.

In addition, the vehicle that Nancy wants to purchase can be put on the 'capital plan'.

NEW BUSINESS

Fundraising Proposal:

Bill Shontz made a Power Point presentation on the possibility of raising funds for the Friends via Market America (marketamerica.com). Market America is an internet product brokerage company that helps people buy products on line. They accept only 501c3 non-profit organizations. Those who shop through Market America under the "Friends of the SC heading" can choose products from 3500 partner stores or Market America products. Each time a purchase is made, the Friends gets points. For every 1200 points accumulated, the Friends gets \$300. In addition, the buyer has access to the best deals, comparison shopping (best price), and cash back (2-35%). The maximum an organization can earn in one year is \$187,000. There is no financial commitment and no minimum. Market America has an A+ rating with the Better Business Bureau.

The Friends will discuss the Market America proposal at their next meeting and report its decision to the COA at the September 2 meeting.

Landscaping/sidewalk Work:

Nancy said there are plans are to remove the current sidewalk in front of Bangs (West entrance) because of its unevenness and problem for walkers and wheelchairs. It will be replaced with a smooth, carefully graded cement walk. The trees will be removed because the roots have caused upheaval of the walkway. Benches under the overhang will also be removed. New landscaping will replace the trees and benches will be placed closer to the curb. This will occur before Labor Day and \$25,000 is budgeted for the project. It may temporarily close that entrance.

Alan Root expressed concern about removing the benches under the overhang. They provide protection and safety in the rain and snow. The trees also provide needed shade.

Nancy suggested a meeting of those interested to discuss those and other concerns and to bring them before Ron Bohonowicz, the Head of Maintenance.

Alan, Dan and Lillian Scott volunteered to meet regarding concerns about the landscaping project.

Friends Annual Meeting:

Barbara Slovin reported. At the Annual Meeting on June 21, with about 30 people in attendance, new officers were elected. The Friends is still looking for a Treasurer.

Alan Root-generated Survey:

Alan provided a draft form of an "Amherst Senior Center 5-Year Plan" survey. Its purpose is to get raw ideas of what users of the SC would like to see evolve over the next 5 years. He would like to see the form enclosed in the next edition of the Senior Spirit.

Nancy pointed out that it would cost about \$100 to print and include that in the Senior Spirit. If it goes in the newsletter it will appear as a COA questionnaire, therefore she asked the Council, "Are the questions worded the way you want them? Are those the questions you want to ask? Do you like what it is asking?"

Kathy said she has an uncomfortable reaction to the first sentence regarding 'seniors contributing heavily to the cost of public schools that they do not use'.

Further discussion revealed several recommended changes. It was decided that the COA needs more time to edit Alan Root's draft. **An Ad Hoc sub-committee of Joel Gordon, Kathy Koplow and Dick Kofler volunteered to work with Alan to make the necessary changes before it gets sent out in the October/November Senior Spirit.**

SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

Ad Hoc Survey:

Rosemary said Randal Stokes is scheduled to give a Power Point presentation to the Select Board on July 26. The committee needs to meet shortly to discuss reformatting the 2010 Survey on the Town website and a presentation at the fall Town Meeting.

SHAG (Senior Health Advisory Group):

Dan said that in his absence, the committee discussed changing our Senior Health Services clinic into a Nurse Practitioner clinic.

Highland Valley Elder Services:

Joan reported. Grants totaling \$130,000 are available for distribution. The due date for applications is July 23.

Changes Sub-committee:

The group will meet shortly to talk about how the mini reorganization is going and how money can be best used to renovate areas in Bangs.

COA Nominating Committee FY11 Report:

Doris has completed her second full term. Rosemary has completed her first full term.

Nancy said the nominating committee met and made recommendations to reappoint those members but all of the applications had not been forwarded from Town Hall at that time. Therefore, the committee will have to meet again to interview the rest of the applicants and once again make their recommendations. The COA will have to wait until September to vote on the agreement that is made between the nominating committee and Town Manager.

The nominating committee should not include members who are up for nomination.

The nominating committee is comprised of Dan, Mary Jane Laus and Joel Gordon.

STAFF REPORTS

GRACE Art Workshops:

Maura applied for a grant through "Art Angels", a group of women artists who personally donate money that is managed by the Community Foundation of Western Mass. The grant allows for doing a series of twelve art workshops at the Clark House, Ann Whalen and Chestnut Court. There is an artist facilitator who provides the materials. It is free-form and encourages participants to discover their own inner artist. The first workshop was on Tuesday at Chestnut Court. The site will rotate weekly to encourage broad participation and community building. The project is based on an organization in Vermont called GRACE (Grass Roots Art and Community Education). It started with an artist who does workshops with children, people in nursing homes, and people with disabilities or mental health issues. Participants have had international exhibitions.

Juana spoke highly of the project. Eight people participated in the first workshop. They will be held every Tuesday at 9:45 AM, except July 20. Everyone is welcome regardless of age. There will be a show at the end of the twelve weeks.

Nancy said that she applied for a grant to pay for training with UMass Transit so that Evelyn Ross can be trained to drive our 15-passenger van and get a commercial license.

The COA meeting adjourned at 10:38 AM.

List of Meeting Documents:

- Agenda for July 8, 2010
- Minutes of the June 3, 2010 COA Meeting
- Friends Treasurer's Report
- Amherst Senior Center 5-year Plan Survey (draft)

The next meeting of the COA will be held on September 2, 2010 at 9:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the June 3, 2010 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.